



MEDIA RELEASE

Childish Leadership - A Poor Foundation for the Future

Monday September 24, 2012. Kameleons-developing leaders Principal Michael Peiniger believes that Leadership is in a state of crisis in Australia and points to the behaviour of debate in parliament by the nation's elected leaders as an example of childish adults that are determining the future for this nation.

"However, when seeking examples of solid and sustainable leadership, we need look no further than the example set by our children, especially as businesses and government would benefit greatly with less childish and more child-like leadership," said Michael Peiniger.

Peiniger acknowledges that this statement always generates the obvious immediate question – are children really better leaders than adults?

Of course adults know more than children – language, mathematics, science, general knowledge. But in the art and science of leadership, children demonstrate more natural leadership traits than adults.

Kameleons-developing leaders has gathered extensive data from the results of the organisation's experiential leadership activities (conducted with more than 2500 adults and over 1000 children) and the results revealed five ways in which children consistently demonstrate better leadership and team development skills than adults.

The first is the ability for children to look at the big picture and not get bogged down with minor details. In contrast, adults characteristically get trapped with discussions relating to options, planning, ensuring everyone has a role and that they are 'happy'.

"Adults are all or nothing – children focus on completion and meeting the requirements of the task at hand and beginning with the end in mind" said Michael Peiniger.

"Whilst the adults are also far more likely to focus on one idea and drive this to execution. Conversely children tended to have a large range of options ideas, and kept coming up with more even after the best option has been determined. They demonstrate a willingness to try new things, and keep trying when initial ideas don't bear fruit."

Children consistently demonstrate a far greater ability to recognize and adapt to change than adults. When a decision is made without their knowledge or input, adults are far less prepared to accept this than children.

In team environments, more often than not, children will adapt the method of completion to accommodate physically impaired or injured members. Children appear quite ready to accept the inherent differences within their teams and recognise that individuals bring different strengths and weaknesses to the group.

When adults are faced with an activity that might put one or more of the members of the team in an uncomfortable position, they are more prone to seeking an exception for the individual rather than change their plan or activities.

In their capacity to listen and their willingness to learn (both from others and from their own mistakes) children far exceed adults in ability. Children listen fully to briefs required before an activity – they consider their options, and then ask questions to clarify any ambiguity regarding instructions.

If anything, children demonstrate this ability to excess, often asking more questions than they need before they are sure they can complete a task. During activity debriefs, children are far more willing to discuss the areas in which they needed to improve, as well as recognise the areas in which they did well.

Adults are less likely to listen effectively to instructions, often only half-listening to the latter half of a brief as they begin to plan / discuss their first ideas.

Comments such as ‘I have done this before’ or ‘This should be easy’ tended to abound, with talking rather than listening being the main focus of communication. Instructions and rules were often repeated because they weren’t paying attention at the outset.

Although adults are quite effective at discussing the strengths of their approach to a task, they are more likely to be reticent on discussing areas for improvement.

Reflecting on the results gathered to date by Kameleons, Michael Peiniger said, “As we age and mature, it’s natural that certain behaviors and traits abate, but unfortunately some positive qualities also diminish in the process.”

Imagine how much more effective our political and business leaders would be if they:

1. Focussed on end requirements rather than on less important detail,
2. Listened to all options to solve a problem and evaluated on merits,
3. Recognised changes in the workplace and skillfully adapted both their behaviour and influenced the behaviour of their team,
4. Accepted both the strengths and limitations of team members equally, &
5. Demonstrated a willingness to learn from successes and mistakes (both from themselves and their people).

Michael Peiniger concluded, “It’s never too late to reclaim those positive characteristics of growing up and to use them to enhance the wisdom and know-how acquired with age.”

“Seeking inspirational leadership requires looking no further than the school playgrounds as examples of great leadership are demonstrated every day – we just have to have the eyes to see them and the desire to learn from them.”

Media enquiries:

Mr. Joe Perri
Joe Perri & Associates Pty Ltd
Telephone/Fax: +61 3 9324 0362
Mobile: +61 412 112 545
Email: jperri@joeperri.com.au

Notes to the editor: About Michael Peiniger

Michael Peiniger is the founder of Kameleons, a boutique leadership & team building consultancy committed to providing businesses and individuals with the expertise and solutions that they need to succeed in today's ever changing work environment.

Passionate about leadership and the need for businesses to harness individuals', Michael develops the natural skills of individuals so that they can fulfil their full potential.

Michael has a broad professional background that includes leadership and team facilitation, leadership course design, management consulting, change management and senior manager coaching and development.

Key skills include his ability to weave complex leadership theories and the strategic 'big picture' into simple and practical leadership solutions through his honest, direct and results oriented style.

Michael's career began with Royal Australian Air Force where he succeeded in a wide variety of challenging roles, including an exchange with the Royal Air Force in Scotland.

During his defence career, Michael won the prestigious Air Force Association leadership sword in 1998 and progressed to the rank of Squadron Leader ahead of his peers.

As the senior instructor at the Air Force Officers' Training School, Michael trained more than 1500 junior officers to meet the demanding requirements of leadership and adaptation to change that is required of a leader in the dynamic military environment.

Since leaving the Air Force, Michael has used his extensive leadership and management experience to provide tailored leadership consultancy services and dynamic facilitation for a wide variety of organisations. These include:

APIA	Lonely Planet Publications
Australian Unity	The Meinhardt Group
City West Water	Sensis
Fosters Group	Shannons Insurance
Jetstar	Realestate.com
The Laminex Group	Victorian Workcover Authority

Michael holds a Master of Business Administration (HR / Leadership) and a Bachelor of Physics. He is a Fellow of the Institute for Learning Practitioners and holds a Diploma in Assessment & Training Systems as well as the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment.